

# HAUTE DESIGNERS, MASTER WEAVERS

Lakme Fashion Week has set a benchmark for Indian designers. MEHER CASTELINO reports on the highlights.



ASIF SHAIKH



GAURANG



MAKU



INDIGENE



PAROVITA BANERJEE

**T**he fabulous **Walking Hand in Hand – The Craft + Design +**

**Society** show was one of the highlights of the first day at Lakmé Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2016. The innovative presentation featured India's five top designers who teamed up with the best craftsmen and expert weavers. They displayed creations that combined designer and craft skills. Day Two was devoted to Sustainable and Indian Textiles. Designers presented interesting collections, showcasing textiles and crafts and also upcycling and recycling fabrics. The message was clear: fashion can be sustainable.

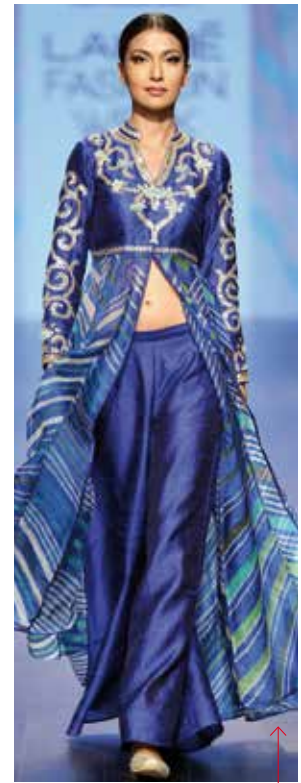


Chikankari came alive on the ramp under the creative guidance of **Aneeth Arora**.

Master craftsman **Jakir Hussain Mondol** worked his magic on the pretty summer dresses, cool blouses, layered minis, softly embroidered long-sleeved covers, delicately embellished midis, skirts and gowns in shades of white and pale blue/grey. Just perfect as the mercury rises.



Giving kinkhab his amazing touches, **Rajesh Pratap Singh** worked with master weaver **Haseem Muhammad** for a striking collection of formal westernwear. Using rich, golden brocade with floral weaves, Singh presented culottes with cropped tops, bias cut jackets, dhoti pants, capris, coat dresses, trouser suits, midi/maxi skirts, 'A' line midis, bell bottom pants and jacket combos. Add to that the double-breasted coat, and the look is decisive.



The glory of the leheriya was brought centre stage by **Anupama Bose's** skills and **Islammuddin Neelgar's** expertise.

The gorgeous leheriya designs in rainbow hues were turned into stunning ensembles. A ravishing red kaftan, a feminine green/blue gown, an electric anarkali, a variety of sarees in leheriya and the lehenga, choli and dupatta were perfect offering of memorable ethnic formals.



Showcasing the grandeur of Banaras brocades, **Hemang Agarwal** worked with master weaver **Sharfuddin Ansari** for his sensational line of Banarasi sarees teamed with jackets and blouses. The rich hues of Banaras brocades mesmerised as yellow, blue, grey, black, red, green, bronze and copper came together on stripes and floral weaves.





Giving the age-old ajrakh technique a contemporary twist, **Asif Shaikh** worked with master craftsman **Jabbar Khatri**. The result? Gorgeous formal sarees with stylish blouses. Long skirts dazzled with intricate ajrakh designs as did kurtas, anarkalis, palazzos, lehengas, blouses and dupattas, in a myriad colours and prints. Menswear featured kurtas and shawls with wide salwars or churidars.



**Debashri Samanta's** Love Thy Nature collection had different techniques. Engineered luxurious handwoven textiles and statement cuts were an accolade to Mother Earth. Weaving was integral to the collection. The textile technique was inspired by jamdani but the look and feel were distinct in fabric. Tussar silk and hand-spun khadi cotton were used generously. Motifs like tiny bugs, flower vines, and intricate roses were woven in.



**Shani Himanshu and Mia Morikawa** of 11.11 CellDSGN presented their design story with The Khadi Way. The silhouettes were fluid and timeless. The 11.11/eleven eleven label framed the ensembles in khadi fabrics using natural dyes in block and vegetable prints, ensuring sustainability of local strengths. The distinction between daywear and eveningwear dissolved, creating a unique identity. Serene silhouettes were crafted in khadi denim, kala (organic) cotton, khadi cotton and fine silks with their winter highlights of khadi merino wool and ari wool. New explorations in mirror work embroidery, bandhani and patchwork styles marked the collection.



A novel B2C or direct-to-consumer concept featured the grand Akaaro collection by Artisans' Centre for Art, Craft and Design, Mumbai. For the first time in Fashion Weeks, **Gaurav Jai Gupta's** Akaaro label, known for innovative textiles, textures and constructions, presented over 300 pieces. Artisans' Centre champions ethical fashion. The collection, Think. Make. had 14 pieces created for Lakmé Fashion Week. Highlights included long shirts, cool dresses, tunics, singular shirts and capes in a palette from pastels to bright pink, blue, orange and white in cotton and silk. Priced between ₹7,000 and 30,000, it showcased outstanding weaves from Banaras, Phulia and Panipat.



The **#indiaincollective** show created excitement on the ramp with five fashion brands. The Aish label by **Nupur Goenka** showed The Expedition collection with handmade and woven creations. She used crafts from Bengal, Pashmina and Khamir cotton from Gujarat. The colour card had perennial favourites, black and white, with small hints of bright hues. The collection was replete with craft techniques like mirror work, batik and Jamdani weaves. Silhouettes were flowing and feminine, especially the drop waist pleated dress, the negative/positive black/white mini, kaftans with geometric prints and a checked maxi with a long-sleeve mirror work coat.

Injiri by **Chinar Farooqui** revived rustic style from the Kutch. Farooqui presented Rebari, a collection of traditional elegance revived for the contemporary dresser. Inspired by unstitched skirts or Pernu, and Pachedi turbans, the colour scheme was white and black with simple textures and weft cross borders, reviving hand-woven and spun, organic, cotton from Bhujodi, Kutch. Draped garments had large accents. There were striped pants, bias yoke blouses, smocks, palazzos, striped jackets, kedia style tops, midis with skirts, gathered summer dresses and a long-sleeved black maxi pinafore with interesting yoke detailing.



**Santanu Das and Chirag Gandhi** of Maku believe in slow fashion and sustainability. They presented a monochrome collection in ecru and indigo. The eight hand-stitched garments had a uniform silhouette of empire line smocks with loose, knotted-at-the-back shirts. The garments were created in different fabrics including muslin, jamdani, fine cotton, linen and silk. The look was fluid and cool. Inspired by air, water and sky, the collection highlighted the textile traditions and prints of Bengal. Maku has experimented with the Tangail saree in the past. The designers try to ensure there is no wastage while creating the garments to showcase a striking, practical, long-lasting collection.



**Amrit Kumar and Mriga Kapadiya** of Nor Black Nor White, presented their colourful retro collection of menswear and women's garments, 100% Pure Love. Working with three clamp dyed silks from Kutch, vibrant cotton checks from Kerala and ikats from Andhra Pradesh, the pair created a multi-coloured, cool range. The Kutch section had feminine flowy silhouettes, like embroidered boleros. The ikats were given the unisex look. The Kerala checks included the regal Kerala gold handloom Mushru. On offer were long blousons, bermudas, loose tunics, multi-coloured kaftans and floppy jackets.



**Gaurang Shah** presented calico's iconic weaves and techniques. Calico emphasises the rich and vibrant history of Indian craftsmanship. Each ensemble was crafted from exquisite hand-woven textiles in khadi, uppada and kota, using iamdani technique. The patterns were woven with a non-structural weft. To that was added chikankari embroidery. Working with weavers across India, Shah's designs begin at the loom and emerge as finely crafted outfits befitting royalty.



**Amrich** is inspired by the intersection of traditions, techniques, styles and habits. The collection featured garments made using numerous hand processes. It also had a good amount of variety, from the specially developed khadi and hand-woven cotton and silk textiles to the time-tested techniques like ikat, shibori, resist hand-block printing and natural dyes.





**Indigene** by **Jaya Bhatt and Ruchi Tripathi** showed a refreshing collection, Transience. The theme was inspired by Wabi-Sabi, a Japanese rubric of rustic simplicity and understated elegance. The collection had a quiet, free-flowing osmosis of natural objects and processes. They added to that, hand-printed ajrakh, hand-spun and hand-woven khadi. The forms, geometric and linear, were influenced by Gurunsi architecture and the elaborately decorated walls of Burkina Faso in Africa.



The **Meraki** Project by **Sonali Pamnani** called the collection, All Work and No Play. Soaked in a beautiful mix of natural, hand-woven textiles such as silk organza, pure cotton and hand-woven cotton ikat, she used quirky fabric manipulation techniques such as hand embroidered texts. The effect was an interesting texture on the surface of the garments. The colour palette consisted of white with an array of hues appropriate for the season, including pinks, blues, greys, yellows and greens.



**Paromita Banerjee's** Salt of Life flowed free and easy, delicate and breezy. The collection was presented through two distinct stories. Luxurious hand-woven fabrics like khadi, malkha, linen and cotton were created into voluminous Mughal jamas, Punjabi pyjamas, shift dresses and draped stoles. The print story featured varying triangular motifs. The indigo line was the second offering with Dhakai Jamdani from Bengal in interesting hand-woven techniques of extra weft and motifs. Sarees were teamed with relaxed, wide blouses, smocks and peasant tops. Waste fabric was turned into footwear, bags, stoles, buttons and tassels.



**Mrinalini Gupta**, known for her practical organic clothing, presented an elegant and timeless collection, Banaras. Working with gorgeous weaves from Varanasi, the collection was feminine, fashionable yet minimal in rustic glamour. Silhouettes were comfortable. Layered and cinched at the waist with belts, there were floppy homeless jackets, coffee soaked shirts, tea-stained tunics, waistcoats, bag jackets, loosely knotted kurtas and lungi skirts. Unconventional detailing and hand knotting were the only embellishments.



**Priyanka Ella Lorena Lama's** collection, Maitake was a Zen-like offering. Lama, whose label is called P.E.L.L.A., worked with an exotic milieu of fabrics. She selected fragile, light hand-woven pure Eri, Ahimsa silk, Cashmere and Pashmina. The shade card was subdued with warm beige tones. Surface texturing was with reclaimed pine wood and silk thread. Developed from a single block of fabric, the patterns were cleverly tessellated to form silhouettes that were relaxed and languid. The ensembles had a New Age feel that spelt femininity.



**Swati Kalsi's** Monad line was an ode to the beauty of the traditional sujani embroidery and fabulous hand-woven fabrics. Working around luxurious global-inspired silhouettes, Kalsi worked with shades of black, ivory, camel, grey and madder. The hand-woven textiles included tussar and ghicha silk, cotton and cotton silk. For glamour, there was silk organza. She used sujani embroidery for an essentially feminine fashion offering.



**Swati and Sunaina** presented woven heirloom sarees. They worked with master weavers of Banaras for their latest collection, The Lightness of Being Radha. The intricate textiles were embellished with delicate leaves and stalks, flowers and grasshoppers. The palette was pastel. The effect, light as the breeze. Muslins were woven with the finest hand-spun cotton with gossamer jamdani. The very technical traditional weave of rung-kat was seen with the Aab-ae-rawan, glittering pure zari and Mughal motifs.



**Shreya Oza's** ASA label has a utilitarian approach, different from the current extravagant fashion scenario. The choice of fabrics was a mix of handloom and natural fibres like cotton and silk. The fabric was dyed in organic and unprocessed substances to maintain a healthy and eco-friendly touch. Oza displayed a magnificent compilation of classy and chic attire, voguish and global yet mainstream Indian.



**Swati Vijaivargie** unveiled her collection, Bagh. The show highlighted intricate medieval Chintz prints, a mesmerising heirloom of the past, revisiting and reinventing the classic floral print. A mélange of then and now, the collection showcased delicate motifs. Intricate aari embroidery and appliqué work layered delicately over gorgeous shibori prints. The palette was playful, ranging from ivory to coral, crimson, turquoise, Prussian blue and sage.



**Wendell Rodricks'** Indica Emporia collection celebrated referenced antique Indian clothing icons. Ghagras turned into capes, pajamas into off-shoulder blouses, dhotis morphed into sarees, cholis hit the floor, capes skimmed over kurtas. Sarees were hand-woven in bright colours like fuchsia, pomegranate, indigo, purple, peacock blues and greens. Using khadi cotton, silk tussar, muga and organza, the effect was Indian yet international, minimal yet extravagant.



Designer **Bina Rao**, co-founder of the Creative Bee Foundation, advisor to the ministry of textiles and member of World Craft Council, gave an informative and enlightening talk on sustainability in fashion and textiles. The walk-through talk explained the role of a designer towards sustainability. Sustainability, she emphasised, was for all of us. She hoped the current buzz words including slow fashion, eco fashion, sustainable fashion, recycle/upcycle, organic clothing were not just passing fads. **FF**